

FACT SHEET



EPA
Region 7

Nichols, Iowa Ground Water Site
Nichols, Iowa

April 2000

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 7 continues to investigate soil and ground water contamination in Nichols, Iowa. EPA will conduct sampling in Nichols the week of April 10, 2000. The sampling activity is expected to take one week.

SAMPLING ACTIVITIES

EPA will take soil and ground water samples to identify potential source areas of nitrate and herbicide contamination. Monitoring wells and tap water in homes that previously had levels of nitrates and herbicides above the public drinking water standards, also called maximum contaminant levels (MCLs), will be sampled. Sampling the tap water in a home takes about an hour. Property owners will receive the sample results from EPA approximately two months after sampling.

SUPERFUND PROGRAM

EPA is conducting the investigation of the contamination in Nichols under the Superfund program. Congress established the Superfund program in 1980 in response to growing concerns about health and environmental risks posed by hazardous waste sites. Superfund locates, investigates, and cleans up hazardous waste sites. EPA will use the data from samples taken in Nichols to determine if the site warrants placement on the National Priorities List (NPL). Placement on the NPL can lead to the cleanup of contaminated ground water or some type of permanent solution for potable drinking water.

BACKGROUND

In January 1997, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) sampled three private wells in Nichols in response to a complaint about the ground water. Nitrates and herbicides, such as alachlor, atrazine and metolachlor, were discovered in the water. Additional sampling of private wells was conducted later in 1997 by IDNR and the Muscatine County Health Department and by Monsanto. The results of the sampling showed two areas of ground water contaminated with nitrates. Within these two areas were smaller areas of ground water contaminated with the

herbicides alachlor and atrazine. Some contaminants were found at levels above MCLs. Based on the samples taken, two possible sources of the contamination were identified, the former Amoco Cropmate site and Nichols Agriservice.

In April 1999, EPA sampled soil, sediment, and ground water at seven areas to determine if the areas could be sources of the contamination. The sample data eliminated several potential source areas and identified the former Amoco Cropmate site and Nichols Agriservice as likely source areas. Ground water samples were also taken from private homes to ensure that citizens were not drinking contaminated water.

The 7.5-acre former Amoco Cropmate site is on the western edge of Nichols. Past operations at the site included formulation and storage of agricultural fertilizers and the storage and sale of herbicides. All buildings at the site were razed in 1987 after the facility ceased operation. The site is currently covered with vegetation.

Nichols Agriservice, on the north side of Nichols, is a full-service agriservice facility storing fertilizer, anhydrous ammonia, herbicides and other agricultural farm chemicals. A grain elevator and other office and storage buildings are located on the property.

United Agri Products, Inc., the parent corporation of the Cropmate Company, is currently supplying bottled water to approximately 13 homes where the ground water is contaminated with nitrates above the MCL. Monsanto, the maker of alachlor, and Novartis, the maker of atrazine, are supplying filters that remove herbicides in water to approximately 20 homes. Since 1997, Monsanto has annually sampled tap water in homes in the area of herbicide-contaminated ground water to ensure all homes that need filters are receiving them and the installed filters are working properly.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have questions about this fact sheet or need additional information, please contact:

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